



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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TOP HONOR IN 1989 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP CONTEST GOES TO A PAIR OF BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCKS

In a dramatic tie-breaking vote, a pair of black-bellied whistling ducks in flight at sunrise won the 1989 Federal Duck Stamp Contest held November 6-7 in Washington, DC. The acrylic painting was chosen from among 603 entries in the 41st annual contest sponsored by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

When contacted at his home in Plymouth, Minnesota, by Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan, the audience heard self-taught winning artist Jim Hautman exclaim, "I can't believe it. How do I know you're not kidding? Wow!" When Secretary Lujan invited Hautman to come to Washington to meet President Bush the following afternoon, he responded, "I guess this isn't a joke!"

Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner then congratulated Hautman on taking top honors and told him his design will make a beautiful Duck Stamp.

Turner added, "The Federal Duck Stamp has helped reduce wetlands loss by funding the acquisition of nearly 4 million wetland acres since the program began in 1934. As the backbone of this Nation's effort to protect and preserve vital wetland habitat, the Duck Stamp can truly be called conservation's stamp of success."

Hautman is well aware of the value of the Duck Stamp Program in preserving wetlands. "It is important for people to learn that this country's wetlands are in trouble. The more people understand this, the more likely they are to work to save this critical type of wildlife habitat," he said. "As this year's winner, I plan to speak out on behalf of wetlands preservation."

All hunters 16 years of age and older are required to purchase the Federal Duck Stamp in order to hunt waterfowl. In addition, it has become a valuable collector's item and is bought by philatelists and conservationists across the country. Money from the sale of Duck Stamps is deposited in the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and used to add vital waterfowl habitat to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In a second tie-breaker, an acrylic rendition of a lone red-breasted merganser by Rick Kelley of Hudson, Wisconsin, took second place; and third-place honors went to Robert Leslie of Turnersville, New Jersey, for his acrylic painting of a group of Barrow's goldeneyes.

The 25-year-old Hautman is among the youngest ever to win the Duck Stamp Contest, and this was his fifth try. In 1987, his acrylic painting of a pair of bufflehead ducks flying over water placed third to fellow Minnesota artist Dan Smith. A full-time wildlife artist, he exhibits regularly at the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation's wildlife art show, as well as local exhibitions.

A Minnesota native, Hautman is an avid outdoorsman and hunter. He has been painting since childhood and decided to combine his love of the outdoors with his artistic ability.

"I chose to depict the black-bellied whistling duck because a friend gave me a couple of mounted specimens. I think it is a beautiful duck and only wish I could have observed it in the wild," Hautman said. "Now that I've won the contest, I plan to keep painting and improve my skills as an artist. I'm also going to take special trips to study wildlife in its natural habitat."

Long legs and an erect posture give the black-bellied whistling duck (called red-billed whistling duck by some taxonomists) a heron-like appearance. The distinctive black belly and sides are the most identifiable markings of this cinnamon-colored duck. It is native to the southern coast of Texas and coastal Mexico and Central America, and is occasionally found in Louisiana.

Tropical lagoons and shallow marshes are favorite haunts for this nocturnal perching duck. It nests in tree cavities situated close to water, and does not often stir or feed until dark.

The judges for this year's contest were Kathy Foley, director of the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum (world-renowned for its collections of bird art) in Wausau, Wisconsin; retired Lt. Gen. David Grange, art collector and conservationist from The Plains, Virginia; Fred Kingwill, Ducks Unlimited member and wildlife artist from Jackson, Wyoming; David Lank, internationally known wildlife art historian from Montreal, Canada; and Ron Schara, outdoor writer and broadcaster from Minneapolis, Minnesota. The alternate judge this year was Susan Bournique, photo editor for The Nature Conservancy.

The Duck Stamp has been issued annually by the Federal Government since 1934 when Jay N. "Ding" Darling's drawing entitled "Mallards Dropping In" became the first design for the stamp. Subsequent artwork was commissioned until the contest began in 1949.

That first stamp, signed by Darling, was recently sold to a Tennessee collector for an undisclosed six-figure amount, and quickly insured for \$300,000.

The Federal Government offers no monetary award to the winner. A pane of stamps bearing the artist's design and autographed by the Secretary of the Interior is presented to the artist during the next year's competition. However, commercial wildlife art dealers market limited edition prints of the winning design under private agreements with the artist. Through this contest, the reputations of previously unknown artists have been established and those of professionals considerably enhanced.

The five species eligible for this year's contest were selected from a list of eight that have never before appeared on a Federal Duck Stamp. Next year, the black-bellied whistling duck will be dropped and the king eider will be added to the list of five eligible species. In the 1991 contest, the surf scoter will be added to the list of eligible species, and in 1992, the mottled duck. Through an annual process of elimination, all 42 species of North American waterfowl will be portrayed on a Duck Stamp by 1997.

The current 1989 Duck Stamp, designed by 1988 contest winner Neal Anderson, is on sale at most U.S. Post Offices and some national wildlife refuges across the country for \$12.50.

Information about the 1990 Duck Stamp Contest will be available next spring from the Duck Stamp Office, 202-343-4354.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Black-and-white glossy prints of the winning design are available on a loan basis from the Fish and Wildlife Service's Audio-Visual office, 202-343-5611.

